



Mike Lenares  
Mayor

# TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET  
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

### MINUTES

#### NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

March 16, 2011

**Note: While an audio verbatim transcript of this meeting is available in the Town Clerk's Office, sound system problems have rendered portions of the recording inaudible.**

Mayor Wright called the Special Meeting of the Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Helen Nelson Room, Town Hall.

#### I PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

#### II ROLL CALL

##### Councilors Present

Councilor Banach  
Councilor Bottalico  
Councilor Casasanta  
Councilor Cohen  
Councilor Klett  
Councilor McBride  
Councilor Nasinnyk  
Mayor Lenares

##### Staff Present

John Salomone, Town Manager  
Jaime Trevethan, Executive Assistant  
Ann Harter, Director of Finance  
Lisa Rydecki, Deputy Finance Director  
Ken Freidenberg, Director of Human Services  
Richard Mulhall, Chief of Police  
Roxanne Verbridge, Administrative Asst. to the Chief  
Chris Schroeder, Fire Marshal/Fire Chief

#### III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ON AGENDA

Rose Lyons – 46 Elton Drive: Ms. Lyons recalled former Mayor Mortensen's remarks at the May 27, 2008 Council meeting in which he asked the Council to refuse State grants for the municipal parking lot and artificial turf field projects. She stated that all possible grant funding should go through the Town Manager's office as well as the entire Council and noted that these two grants did not. She remarked that it boggles her mind that former Mayor Wright could just walk into the Governor's office to request money without informing the Town Manager or obtaining the consensus of the Council. She stated that she does not expect the Council to remove the funding for the turf project from the CIP budget, but implored the Council to think long and hard about its actions.

Mady Kenny – 53 Crestview Drive: Ms. Kenny agreed with Ms. Lyons' comments. She proposed two projects for the Council to address: the front steps of Town Hall, which she remarked are dangerous and in shameful condition, and to remove the algae in Mill Pond. She noted that the Mill Pond falls are a landmark as well as the logo for the Town and should be cleaned and maintained properly.

#### IV CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

##### A Budget Review – Human Services: Ken Freidenberg, Director

The Council reviewed the Human Services budget with Mr. Freidenberg. He indicated that there is little change in the Human Services Department budget other than a slight adjustment in part-time, seasonal and special contractors to account for seasonal van drivers. Mr. Freidenberg explained the makeup of the full and part-time staff as well as the contractual staff, which consists of licensed clinical therapists

Councilor Banach inquired about the number of caseloads and overall need for services in comparison to last year. He also inquired whether the Human Services department ever has to turn away potential cases. Mr. Freidenberg replied that need and caseloads for all programs, including youth and family counseling, social and financial casework, the food bank and the holiday programs have increased since last year. He stated that while it has been a challenge the Department is able to handle the work and while there may occasionally be a short waiting list for services, the department is generally able to handle the increased needs. Mr. Freidenberg thanked the public for its generous response to increased need with the food bank, holiday program donations, etc. The Council discussed the various services offered by the department, including youth services and the Juvenile Review Board as well as the various fundraising efforts put on by the department. Mr. Freidenberg explained that some costs are also offset by program fees, although the Department strives to make those programs as affordable as possible. He also discussed the food bank in more detail, explaining that the number of families served by the food bank has increased by 30% over the past two years. He explained that all residents who seek the Department's services are screened to confirm residence in the Town as well as financial eligibility.

##### B Budget Review – Public Safety (Fire, Police, Street Lighting, Emergency Management, MS): Fire Marshal/Chief Schroeder, Asst. Chief Tom Lapierre, Fire Commissioners Seiler and Stoddard

###### Fire Department:

Chief Schroeder indicated that the Pay Per Call (PPC) program continues to be very successful, with increases in both membership and response. Town Manager Salomone stated that the increases in the Fire Department's budget are to cover costs associated with increased volunteerism, including training, technical supplies and equipment costs, much of which is required by the State.

The Council discussed the various components of the Fire Department's budget, including the full-time salary allocation for the Administrative Secretary, transportation, fuel reimbursement costs for the Chief and Assistant Chiefs, and conference costs. Mr. Schroeder noted some upcoming needs for the CIP budget at the various fire stations and noted that the biggest budgetary challenge overall is for equipment and gear used at fire scenes, all of which must be replaced at certain intervals as required by law. He also noted that the Department will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017 and requested that the Council consider budgeting for related items such as dress uniforms in the coming years in anticipation of the event.

Town Manager Salomone indicated that the Fringe Benefit item in the budget is for PPC, volunteer stipend and pension costs. He remarked on the success of the PPC program and indicated that he is comfortable with this funding level. Councilor Klett inquired about the \$31,000 allocated for consultants/contractor costs. Mr. Schroeder explained that this is to cover the cost of volunteers' physicals, which are required by law at certain intervals according to age. He noted that these are specialized physicals that include respiratory checks and other related tests.

Mr. Schroeder indicated that most of the budget allocations for the fire stations are to replace and update furniture, flooring, bathrooms and office items at the Town's various fire stations. He noted that the funding is spread between all of the buildings and is prioritized based on need on a revolving basis.

#### Fire Marshal:

Town Manager Salomone explained that this item is comprised of the salaries of one full-time Fire Marshal and four part-time Deputy Fire Marshals, as well as mandated training and mandated maintenance for equipment such as seismographs and CO sensors. He indicated that the part-time salaries have been reduced to trend due to a decreased need for the part-time hours.

#### Police Department: Chief Richard Mulhall and Roxanne Verbridge, Admin. Asst.

Town Manager Salomone indicated that this budget completes the "right sizing" of the department and noted two newly hired officers. He stated that this will help to control overtime costs. He also noted that response times have been very good while lowering overtime costs by 30% over the past 3-4 years. He noted a salary increase total of 1.24%, which includes contractual step increases as well as a contractual 2% pay increase to take effect in the second half of FY 2011-12.

The Council, Town Manager and Chief discussed vehicle replacement for patrol and non-patrol vehicles. The Town Manager indicated that cruisers are replaced on a rotating basis each year and stated that three rather than the traditional four will be replaced next year. He also indicated that the replacement costs will increase due to the Ford Crown Victoria model being discontinued. Mayor Lenares inquired about the replacement of non-patrol vehicles. Town Manager Salomone replied that due to the much longer lifespan of non-patrol vehicles they are replaced on an as-needed basis through the CIP. Chief Mulhall explained that the non-patrol fleet cars have a life expectancy of 7-10 years and are only replaced when they reach the end of their useful life. He also noted that retired non-patrol vehicles are reused by other departments whenever possible. He noted that the two cars scheduled to be replaced in FY 2011-12 are both approaching 10 years old and are no longer worth maintaining as part of the police fleet.

The Council discussed other components of the Police budget. Chief Mulhall described the "right sizing" of patrol shifts as 5 officers on the day shift, 7 on the evening shift and 4.5 – 5 on the midnight shift. He explained how patrol officers act as primary responders and will follow up on investigations when there is not a detective available. Councilor Casasanta inquired about crossing guards. Chief Mulhall explained that the Police Department is responsible for maintaining and overseeing the crossing guard unit, in coordination with the schools. Mayor Lenares inquired about dispatcher staffing and whether there is concern about having only one dispatcher scheduled over the weekends. Chief Mulhall agreed that the weekend scheduling is a concern. Councilor Banach inquired about whether School Resource Officer (SRO) has any other responsibilities outside of the high school. Chief Mulhall replied that while the SRO is stationed at the high school only, he is also involved in other student functions and community programs. Councilor Cohen indicated that the SRO is also active in the Youth Adult Council. Councilor Klett expressed concern with the Town funding police physicals and inquired why officers can't see their private physicians for annual physicals. Town Manager Salomone indicated that the physicals are contractually required and noted that the Town is self-insured and would be paying for the physicals either way. Councilor Klett maintained that physicals and physical fitness should be the responsibility of the employees. She noted that the Town-appointed physician is not an occupational specialist, and wanted to make sure that the Town is not paying for this service in two different ways.

#### Other Public Safety – Street Lighting

Town Manager Salomone indicated that this fund covers all Town-owned street lights. He stated that the Town also pays a fee for usage of all non-Town owned street lights. Councilor Nagel noted that other towns have recently decreased usage of street lights by dimming or turning them off in the early morning hours. The Town Manager replied that the Town had considered that option but the consensus was that the cost savings did not outweigh the safety concerns of doing so.

## C Budget Review: Health

Town Manager Salomone indicated that the health budget reflects Newington's share on a per capita basis for being a member of the Central Connecticut Health District, and stated that the Town's cost share hasn't changed in FY 2011-12.

## D Budget Review: CIP

Town Manager Salomone gave an overview of the CIP Committee's requests and his proposed CIP budget. He noted that due to recently updated information he has reduced the amount allocated to the Market Square project by \$200,000. He indicated that the \$200,000 was reallocated into the General Fund to help balance the budget. Mayor Lenares remarked that he believes that the \$200,000 should be allocated back into the CIP rather than the General Fund. Town Manager Salomone stated that it is the Council's purview to make amendments to his proposal as they see fit.

Town Manager Salomone noted the reduction of the allocation for the Synthetic Turf Field project due to the bid results, which will come before the Council to consideration at an upcoming meeting. He stated that if the Council concurs with the bid there will be a savings of about \$135,000 plus contingency. Mayor Lenares reiterated that he would prefer to have any savings in the CIP remain in the CIP to be allocated for projects such as road repair. CIP Chairperson Councilor Nasinnyk noted that this is the first she has heard of amended costs for the turf field project and stated that the Council would need to discuss how to reallocate any funding. Councilor Cohen inquired whether the costs for the Market Square project are final numbers. Town Manager Salomone replied that while the Town Engineer has pared down the cost estimates and he is very comfortable with the revision, they should still be considered estimates at this time. Councilor Banach noted that the total savings among the projects appears to be approximately \$400,000. Town Manager Salomone elaborated that \$200,000 of the savings have already been reallocated to the General Fund in his proposed budget. Councilor Klett inquired where the \$200,000 would come from to balance the general fund if it were to be reallocated back to the CIP. Town Manager Salomone stated that it would be up to the Council to make that determination.

Councilor Bottalico inquired about the CIP items eligible for the 55% State reimbursement. Finance Director Ann Harter replied that the school roof replacement at John Wallace Middle School and funding related to the school code compliance projects are eligible for State reimbursement, which is paid as the funds are spent. Mayor Lenares inquired about lease purchase and payments. Mrs. Harter stated that the line item is for fire apparatus, and stated that a breakdown of the item payments and depreciation can be found in appendix "D" of the CIP book. The Council briefly discussed other CIP items such as radios that are offset by revenues.

## E Debt Service

Mrs. Harter noted an increase of about \$150,000 in debt services and explained that the item is for principal and interest for the Town's five bonds. She noted that while there is an increase for FY 2011-12, a bond refunding last year has saved the Town about \$221,000. She noted a chart in the budget document that shows the total savings for the refunding and how the debt will decrease from 2011 through 2015. Town Manager Salomone added that the Town has a very low debt per capita in comparison to State averages.

## F Equipment Reserve

The Council briefly discussed the equipment reserve fund, much of which was discussed during the CIP portion of the agenda. Town Manager Salomone stated that this fund contains the actual transfer to pay for the CIP items.

## V PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ON AGENDA

None.

## VI REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Councilor Klett praised the St. Patrick's Day parade and commented on the great turnout by the Newington Police and Fire Departments.

Councilor Cohen noted that the latest available census data reports Newington's population as being slightly over 30,000 people for the first time. She expressed concern that these figures may impact the Town's Small Cities grant funding. Town Manager Salomone replied that it is possible that, but would not impact the Town right away.

Councilor McBride also praised the parade and expressed appreciation for Newington's great showing at the parade, particularly the Police and Fire Departments and the NHS band.

Mayor Lenares echoed the other Councilors' praise of the parade.

## VII ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn meeting was made at 9:37 p.m. by Councilor Banach, and seconded by Councilor Casasanta. Motion passed 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mrs. Jaime Trevethan  
Executive Assistant to the Town Manager

**Note: While an audio verbatim transcript of meeting is available in the Town Clerk's Office, sound system problems have rendered portions of the recording inaudible.**